

The Star Power of Hollywood Celebrities in the Japanese Advertisements

YAMADA Michiko

愛知大学国際コミュニケーション学部

Faculty of International Communication, Aichi University

E-mail: michikoy@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp

Abstract

This study focused on Japanese and/or Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements and investigated how many Japanese and/or Hollywood celebrities appeared in these advertisements. 1606 advertisements were analyzed and it was found that 48 (3.0%) used Hollywood celebrities and 753 (46.8%) used Japanese celebrities. Forty three face-to-face and email interviews were conducted. It was found that due to the limitation in the airing time of the advertisement, Japanese advertisers felt Hollywood celebrities had a greater value because of their worldwide recognition and the rarity value in Japanese advertisements.

この調査では日本の広告において日本のスターとハリウッドスターが含まれる割合を分析した。1606個の広告を分析した結果、48のCM（3.0%）にはハリウッドスターが、そして753のCM（46.8%）には日本人のスターが使われていた。また対面インタビューとEmailでのインタビュー、43名のインタビュー分析から見てきたのは、日本のCMの短さのためにハリウッドスターを使いたいと日本の広告業者が考えていること、また世界的な知名度とCMに出るという彼らの希少価値によって使われていることが分かった。

Literature Review

It is very important to choose the most suitable endorser when selling a product. Therefore, companies seek to find someone who can fully represent their company and who is also a good fit for both the product and company. To this end, many Japanese

advertisements use celebrities to attract the consumers' attention to achieve the goals of brand recognition and product differentiation, both of which impact the consumers' purchasing decisions (Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg, 2001). There, differentiating the product from its competitors is critical for advertisers. For instance, no commercials are needed for Lamborghini because it looks totally different from other cars, meaning that advertisers do not need to create advertisements to attract potential customers. In contrast, most other car brands need to create a distinction in the consumers' minds. To achieve this, the use of Hollywood celebrities is often an easy solution because these celebrities are associated with elegance, luxury, and wealth; thereby emphasizing the high quality of the product in the consumers' minds.

However, even though starring in advertisements in Japan is considered a sign of stardom, many Hollywood celebrities are reluctant to advertise products especially in their home countries. For example, in the United States, it is considered bad form for a movie star to advertise products. Beattie (2012) gave an example of Japanese TV commercial that featured Tommy Lee Jones endorsing a famous coffee brand, which is not something that people would see in the United States. When Brad Pitt starred in a Chanel advertisement in 2012, many viewers in the United States felt this devalued him as an actor ("Hawking celebrity," 2016). Generally, in the Western culture, if movie stars or famous musicians appear in TV advertisements, viewers feel that these celebrities' fame is falling, so they are desperate enough to sell themselves out to product endorsements, obviously having the opposite effect to that intended by the product advertisers.

However, because of the cultural status given to star power, many local and Hollywood celebrities are used in Japanese advertisements. One of the main reasons that the Hollywood celebrities agree to star in Japanese advertisements is the payment, which can range from \$250,000 to \$600,000 for lesser well-known people to \$1 to \$5 million for more highly paid celebrities such as Sharon Stone, Woody Allen, and Arnold Schwarzenegger for a couple of days' work (Peden, 1993). Another reason that these celebrities agree to appear in Japanese advertisements are the strict contract conditions which limited the advertising exposure to Japan alone (Faiola, 2007).

Using Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements is seen as an easy way to add value to the product, and these stars are seen inside Japan as high quality symbols who render credibility to the product (McCracken, 1989) and increase the effectiveness of the advertisements (Keller, 2003; Blonde & Roozen, 2007; Roozen & Claeys, 2010). For instance, Jude Law starred in a Lexus advertisement in 2015 which was shown in Europe ("Lexus RX," 2015). In the advertisement, a hotel clerk received a car key from Jude Law, and has an amazing experience driving the Lexus around. In the middle of

the advertisement, the camera view becomes her or his view creating subjective shots (Mascelli, 1998) that allows the viewers to share her or his luxurious day. This example shows the importance of choosing the right endorser. In this Jude Law advertisement, the company and the endorsed product are given a positive and luxurious image.

Sometimes, Japanese advertisers even use the celebrities who are dead. For instance, in the middle of 1980s, Levi's used James Dean's image to endorse jeans. According to Linda Butler from Levi's Communications department (Miller, 1993) "It's been really successful. There's a high consumer awareness among young consumers that associate Levi's with James Dean" and "It was a really good fit because the Japanese consumer sees Levi's as an American icon, the original, and James Dean embodies all those same characteristics" (p. 2). What this example demonstrates is that associating celebrities with their known on-screen images works well in Japanese advertisements. Therefore, the use of well-known celebrities from the Western culture (primarily the United States) appears to be very important to Japanese advertisers. This study used demographic analysis and interviews to examine the significance of having celebrities from the Western culture (such as the United States) in Japanese advertisements.

Sample

Demographic analysis

One thousand, six hundred and six advertisements (746 in 1999, 550 in 2000, and 310 in 2001, respectively) that aired from August 1999 to May 2001 in Tokyo and Osaka, the two largest regions in Japan, were analyzed in this study to examine the number of Japanese and non-Japanese celebrities (specifically from the Western culture) that were used in Japanese advertisements. A detailed list of the days the advertisements were shown was developed for each month in Tokyo and Osaka. For Tokyo, the advertisements were taken in 1999 from two days in October, and four days for both November and December, in 2000 four days in January, two days each in February and March, and in 2001, two days in February, one day in April, and three days in May. For Osaka, the advertisements were taken in 1999 from two days in each month from August to December, in 2000 two days in each month in September and October, and one day in November, 2001.

In sum, 24 days (72 hours) in Tokyo and 37 days (111 hours) in Osaka were recorded for a total of 61 days (183 hours) (see Table 1), which represented 8.82% and 6.38% of the total possible days and times that could have been recorded in Tokyo and Osaka, indicating that this sample was representative of the TV advertisements at that time. The dates for the selection were chosen randomly in all three years (250 Sundays,

Table 1: Recorded number of days in Tokyo and Osaka

	Tokyo	Osaka
1999		
August		2
September		2
October	2	2
November	4	2
December	4	2
2000		
January	4	2
February	2	2
March	2	2
April		1
June		1
July		3
August		2
September		2
October		2
November		1
December		3
2001		
February	2	2
March		2
April	1	2
May	3	
Total	24days (72 hours)	37 days (111 hours)

266 Mondays, 125 Tuesdays, 310 Wednesdays, 173 Thursdays, 184 Fridays, and 298 Saturdays). The following two aspects were examined in this study: (i) how many celebrities from the Western culture were used, and (ii) the types of products they endorsed.

Interviews

In early 2002, letters and then emails were sent to around 100 Japanese advertising agencies and some specialist media professors requesting interviews regarding the use of Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements. As Briggs (1986) outlined, it is important to clarify the roles and purpose of the interview to ensure that the focus is

appropriate to the investigation and can yield valuable results. The letters and emails introduced the research, explained the purpose of the interview, and ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the information to be provided.

There were eight positive responses, after which interview timings were agreed upon. All face-to-face interviews were conducted from May to July 2002. The researcher visited each respondent's company, and the interviews were held in a conference room or a big open space, such as a cafeteria. All interviews were recorded with most lasting around 45 minutes to an hour each. All interviews were held in Japanese except for which was conducted in English by an advertising executive who was employed by a Japanese advertising agency. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed to gain a general idea about the use of Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements. The main findings were then translated from Japanese to English.

As there were only eight interviewees at first, each was asked to introduce personnel for additional interviews. A further 35 participants were identified who answered the questions in an email survey rather than through face-to-face interviews. Therefore, a total of 43 interviews were conducted.

In the interview and email survey, four main questions were asked; (1) why do Hollywood celebrities appeal to Japanese audiences, (2) what is the appeal of Hollywood celebrities, (3) why do Hollywood celebrities tend not to endorse products in their home countries, and (4) the significance of Hollywood celebrity endorsements in Japanese advertisements. Other than these four basic questions, there was no strict procedure for the interviews, and interviewees were encouraged to talk freely regarding these four questions and provide any additional remarks.

Results

Demographic Analysis

The analysis revealed that close to half the advertisements in this study (46.8% or 753 advertisements) featured Japanese celebrities while a significantly smaller percentage (3.0% or 48 advertisements) featured Hollywood celebrities such as Penelope Cruz, Cameron Diaz, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lopez, Meg Ryan, Wynona Ryder, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, Tiger Woods, and Catherine Zeta-Jones (see Table 2). A much small percentage (0.3% or five advertisements) featured both Japanese and Hollywood celebrities. Therefore, these five commercials were counted twice. In addition, 12 advertisements (0.7%) which featured Japanese celebrities also included foreigners who were not famous outside Japan, so these were not counted as Hollywood celebrities in this study. While some of these foreigners may have had

Table 2: Characters in Commercials

	<i>n</i> (%)
Japanese celebrities	753 (46.8%)
Non-Japanese stars who were popular only in Japan	12 (0.7%)
Hollywood celebrities	48 (3.0%)
Both Japanese and Hollywood celebrities	5 (0.3%)

Table 3: Product being endorsed
for commercials with Hollywood celebrities

Category	<i>n</i> (%)
Shampoo	12 (25.0%)
Car	7 (14.6%)
Coffee	6 (12.5%)
Others	23 (47.9%)

Table 4: Background (rural or urban)
for commercials with foreigners or Japanese

	Japanese	Foreigners	Hollywood celebrities
Rural	141 (18.7%)	30 (13.4%)	10 (20.8%)
Urban	398 (28.8%)	100 (35.2%)	28 (58.3%)

Japanese citizenship, they were not Asians, while some others had possibly come Japan to seek fame.

For the endorsed products which featured Hollywood celebrities, 12 (25%) were for shampoo, 7 were for cars, and 6 were for coffee (see Table 3). One of the shampoo advertisements which featured Catherine Zeta-Jones had a few different versions for the same product, and this repeatedly shown advertisement was reflected in these findings. In terms of the backgrounds used in the advertisements that featured Hollywood celebrities, twenty eight (58.3%) had urban backgrounds while 10 (20.8%) had rural backgrounds (see Table 4).

Interview

Some interviewees claimed that Hollywood celebrities were used because of the limitation in the airing time in Japanese advertisements. Though it is common to have 60 second TV commercials in the United States, they are most often only 15 to 30 seconds in Japan. Therefore, as the advertisements needed to have a strong impact using Hollywood celebrities was considered to be a more successful approach.

One interviewee mentioned the significance of the rarity value that Hollywood celebrities had compared to Japanese celebrities. Most Hollywood celebrities are famous worldwide, whereas most Japanese celebrities are not famous outside Japan. Another interviewee said that because many Japanese celebrities were very familiar to consumers because of the many advertisements they appeared in. It was important to create distinctions between the products. Therefore, featuring Hollywood celebrities created this “distinctive” element because they were seen rarely in local advertisements

and their celebrity appeal was worldwide.

Discussion

Though the number of Hollywood celebrities featured was much lower than Japanese celebrities, the rarity of the Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements was believed to have a stronger impact on the viewers. In addition, Hollywood celebrities were usually associated with urban environments in Japanese advertisements. Interestingly, most Hollywood celebrities tended to endorse relatively inexpensive products such as shampoo and coffee, indicating the advertisers' intent to attach high quality to common products.

The interviews revealed the importance to advertisers of having “rarely seen” Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements. As Hollywood celebrities are rarely seen in Japanese advertisements, the appeal to the Japanese viewers was believed to be more significant as their worldwide reputation could be more easily connected to a high quality product. Even though Japan and the United States are two of the largest economies in the world, the information flow regarding celebrity culture, is disproportionately one way from the West to Japan.

However, the “rarity value” of Hollywood celebrities needs further clarification. If such rarity is important, an Indian celebrity would have a higher rarity value than a Hollywood celebrity; however, a Hollywood celebrity would have a more positive and stronger impact than the Indian celebrities in Japan. Therefore, the combination of the Hollywood celebrities' worldwide recognition and their rarity value was found to be the main reason such advertisements have greater appeal for Japanese audience.

In the future, it is important to conduct a *longitudinal* study over more than one time period to understand the possible differences. Various studies have reported that frequency of Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertising dropped in the early 2000s (Ace Metrix, 2015; Belch & Belch, 2013; Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005; Daboll, 2011). Schimmelpfennig and Hollensen (2016) claimed that from the 1970s to the 1990s this was because of frequent use of Hollywood celebrities. Further, as celebrities are no longer treated as role models, their presence in an advertisement may have had less of an effect on consumer purchasing decisions. Therefore, it is important to examine if the trend of featuring Hollywood celebrities has changed since the investigation reported in this paper.

Another aspect worth examining is to investigate if local or global celebrities are employed. Prior (2008) stated that increasingly more companies employed local rather than global celebrities in their advertisements to reach their target audiences. For

instance, Dior employs both worldwide and locally famous celebrities, though some brands such as Estee Lauder, Chanel, Lancome, Avon and Revlon, still tend to feature world famous celebrities. These studies indicated that it is necessary to further examine the possible changing trends in the use of Hollywood celebrities in Japan.

Another possible reason for the decreasing number of Hollywood celebrities in advertisements is because of technological change such as the launch of YouTube in 2005 (Graham, 2005). This new technology allowed anyone with internet access to share advertisements. As of 2007, many advertisements had already been posted on YouTube, meaning that people all over the world could see them (Faiola, 2007). Therefore, Hollywood celebrities who had previously featured in advertisements that were only shown in Japan may be more reluctant if these advertisements were available across the Internet, exposing them to a world-wide audience. Therefore, future research could examine the impact of digital advancement on the number of Hollywood celebrities in Japanese advertisements, and compare the collected data in this paper, which was collected before the launch of YouTube.

References

- Ace Metrix (2015). *Celebrity advertisements: Exposing a myth of advertising effectiveness*. Retrieved on August 14, 2016, from http://www.acemetrix.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Ace_Metrix_Insight_CelebrityAdvertisements.pdf
- Beattie, A. C. (2012, March 12). Letter from Tokyo. *Advertising Age*, 83 (11), 10.
- Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2013). A content analysis study of the use of celebrity endorsers in magazine advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 32 (3), 363–389.
- Blonde, K., & Roozen, I. (2007, January). An explorative study of testing the effectiveness of product placement compared to 30-second TV commercials. Paper presented at the 6th International Marketing Trends Congress. Paris.
- Choi, S. M., Lee, W-N., & Kim, H-J. (2005). Lessons from the rich and famous; A cross-cultural comparison of celebrity endorsement in advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 34 (2), 85–98.
- Daboll, P. (2011). Celebrities in advertising are almost always a big waste of money. *Advertising Age* January 11. Retrieved on August 14, 2016, from <http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/celebrities-ads-lead-greater-sales/148174/>
- Erdogan, Z. B., Baker, M. J., & Tagg, S. (2001). Selecting celebrity endorsers: The practitioner's perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41 (3), 39–48.
- Faiola, A. (2007, January 14). U.S. stars shine again in Japan ads: booming firms dust off their yen for A-listers. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved on August 23, 2016, from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/13/AR2007011301375_pf.html
- Graham, J. (2005, November 21) Video websites pop up, invite postings. *USA Today*. Retrieved on August 18, 2016, from http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2005-11-21-video-websites_x.htm
- Hawking celebrities. (2016, March 03). *Business Mirror* [Makati city].
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand synthesis: The multidimensionality of brand knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (4), 595–600.
- Lexus RX (2015). Lexus RX de hi-nichijyo na taiken [Unrealistic experience with Lexus RX] Retrieved on August

- 16, 2016, from <http://response.jp/article/2015/12/20/266540.html>
- Mascelli, J. V. (1998). The Five Cs of Cinematography: Motion Picture Filming Techniques. Silman-James Pr.
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (3), 310–321.
- Miller, C. (1993, March 29). Some celebs just now reaching their potential - and they're dead. *Marketing News*, 27 (7), 2.
- Peden, L. D. (1993, June 20). Film; Seen the one where Arnold sells noodles? The New York Times, Retrieved August 14, 2016, from <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/20/movies/film-seen-the-one-where-arnold-sells-noodles.html>
- Prior, M. (2008, April 11). Meet the locals. *WWD Beautybiz*, 195 (78).
- Schimmelpfennig, C., & Hollensen, S. (2016). Significant decline in celebrity usage in advertising: A review. *The IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, 15 (1), 7–19.
- Roozen, I., & Claeys, C. (2010). The Relative Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement for Print Advertisement. *Review of Business & Economics*, 55 (1): 76–89.